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Gingrich advocates replacing IRS, FDA

WASHINGTON (AP) – First it was Big Bird, now it's the tax man. Add the Internal Revenue Service to the list of government agencies Newt Gingrich would abolish or replace.

"Kick the IRS out of your wallet and out of your records," the House speaker said Saturday. "Get back to an America free from the IRS, in terms of day-to-day micromanagement."

Mr. Gingrich has already suggested with varying degrees of earnestness the elimination of the Education and Labor departments, the Food and Drug Administration, the Health Care Finance Administration and NASA. But is he really talking about abolishing the agency that will process some 115 million tax returns this year?

"Eliminating it or reducing it so dramatically ... you've always got to have some kind of revenue service, but you don't need to have one which is in every single decision" and which requires taxpayers to keep so many records, Mr. Gingrich said on CNBC's "Talk Live."

The Georgia Republican's "Contract with America" and campaign for smaller government are credited with the wins last November that gave Republicans control of Congress. And the speaker shows no signs of letting up.

"I haven't backed off an inch," he said Saturday of his pledge to eliminate federal funds to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which airs the popular "Sesame Street."

The speaker said he's considering a proposal by Rep. Steve Gunderson, R-Wis., that would merge the two departments into a new Department of Education and Training, eliminate the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and save an estimated $21 billion over five years.

If Mr. Gingrich had his way, the FDA and HCFA, which administers Medicare, also would be replaced.

Earlier this month, Mr. Gingrich told his weekly history class at Reinhardt College in Georgia that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration should be disbanded in favor of smaller project teams. Speaking of the Apollo project, which was completed in the early 1970s, he said, "If they disbanded it at that point, I think they'd have been better off, and said, 'OK, now what's our next project?' "